Farmers in arrears—Loans in default of farmers who have become ineligible for fresh credit as their earlier debts have been categorized as substandard or doubtful shall be rescheduled as per the guidelines so that such farmers become eligible for fresh credit.

On restructuring as above, the farmers will become eligible for fresh loans.

(iii) To grant a one-time settlement (OTS) including partial waiver of interest or loan to the small and marginal farmers who have been declared as defaulters and have become ineligible for fresh credit. Banks have also been advised to review cases where credit has been denied on the sole ground that a loan account was settled through compromise or write offs.

(iv) In some parts of the country, farmers face acute distress because of the heavy burden of debt from non-institutional lenders (e.g. private moneylenders). Banks have been permitted to advance loans to such farmers for redeeming their debt from private moneylender and for providing them relief from indebtedness.

(v) All the public sector banks have been advised to reduce their lending rate for agriculture to a single digit rate of not more than 9% per annum on crop loans upto a Ceiling of Rs. 50,000/-. This rate will benefit most of the crop loan account holders and will cover almost all the small and marginal farmers.

(vi) To waive margin/security requirements for agricultural loans up to Rs. 50,000 and agri-business and agri-clinics up to Rs. 5 lakh.

Loss due to reduction in Kharif crop sowing

1058. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 59 lakh hectares of land was not sown during the kharif crop this year and if so, how much loss has been caused due to less sowing; and

(b) the steps taken to overcome the losses due to less sowing?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) As per the reports available with the Corp Weather Watch Group under

Department of Agriculture & Cooperation up to the end of October 2005, the area sown during the kharif season this year under foodgrains and commercial crops in 101.61 million hectares as compared to 100.43 million hectares cultivated during the corresponding period last year. This shows an increased coverage of 1.2 million hectares in the Kharif season this year over the corresponding period last year.

Loss of land fertility

1059. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any study has been undertaken to analyse and determine the loss caused to the fertility of land due to prolonged use of chemical/ inorganic fertilizers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have any proposal for the promotion of organic farming;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) There is no evidence to suggest about loss caused to the fertility of land due to prolonged use of chemicals/inorganic fertilizers. However, investigation under All India Coordinated Research Project under Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) on "Long Term Fertilizer Experiments' over few decades have revealed that prolonged imbalanced use of chemical fertilizers and non application of organic manures affected soil health and crop productivity by causing deficiencies of secondary and micro nutrients. The average consumption of fertilizers in the country is 89.83 kg/ha during 2003-04. This level of consumption is not considered to have any ill effect on the fertility of the land. The ICAR is recommending soil test based Integrated Nutrient Management practices to avoid loss of fertility. Besides, Govt, is also promoting Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) which includes soil test based balanced and judicious use of chemical fertilizers in conjunction with organic fertilizers like Farm Yard Manure, green manure, compost, vermicompost and biofertilizers etc. for sustaining soil health and its productivity.

(c) to (e) To promote organic farming in the Country, Govt, of india has launched